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Forty-fifth session

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 490th MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Monday, 3 October 1994, at 3 p.m.

Chairman: Mr. KAMAL (Pakistan)

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General debate (continued)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.25 p.m.

GENERAL DEBATE (agenda item 4) (continued)

1. Mr. GLEN (Canada) said that the past year had been exceptionally difficult for refugees, humanitarian agencies and the international community. The Rwanda crisis was only the most recent of a series of major refugee situations, not the least of which was former Yugoslavia. Given the difficulties of the Rwanda operation, Canada asked UNHCR to undertake forthwith an exercise to investigate the lessons learned with regard to its own response both at headquarters and in the field. The review, which should involve United Nations agencies, Governments and implementing agencies under the leadership of UNHCR, ought to provide answers to questions which needed to be dealt with at the systemic level, such as crisis prevention, security of relief workers and the problem of demining.

2. At previous sessions of the Executive Committee, his delegation had emphasized that accountability, strategic planning and performance assessment were the key principles of sound management. There was a need for changes in all those areas. One of the primary roles of UNHCR headquarters was to service field operations and every member of the staff was accountable for implementing key UNHCR policies intended to have blanket application, such as those on refugee women and children and on the environment. In that context, Canada welcomed the recent increase in delegation of authority to the field. That, however, was only a beginning. More such delegation was needed, as well as major streamlining of the reports required from field offices. It would appear that some field staff considered the implementation of the key policies he had just mentioned to be optional or were not even aware of their existence. That was not acceptable. Staff and implementing partners had to be assessed on the basis of their capacity and willingness to carry out policy directions issued by UNHCR. A proper accountability framework had to be put in place to that end.

3. The relationship between UNHCR and its implementing partners was also of critical importance. In place of ad hoc practices, clear and transparent procedures had to be established indicating how the selection process was to be conducted and what criteria were to be used. Better and more equitable contracting procedures had to be used and more systematic monitoring of the performance of implementing agencies had to become standard UNHCR practice.

4. With regard to the role of non-governmental organizations and their relationship with UNHCR, Canada was pleased to have been able to make an early contribution to the PARinAC process and hoped that PARinAC would add to effective cooperation between those organizations and UNHCR.

5. It was the Executive Committee's duty to help UNHCR in its continuous effort to find new and better ways of meeting the challenges it faced. In that connection, it might be appropriate to consider the practice of the governing bodies of UNDP and UNFPA, which has reduced their documentation by almost 75 per cent and at whose meetings delegations did not make long general statements, but referred to specific topics of direct relevance to the respective agencies' policies and operations. He invited UNHCR to look at those examples and come forward with proposals that would make it possible for

the Executive Committee to be of greater use to UNHCR. His delegation had for some time been uncomfortable with the fact that the Executive Committee's role had been limited to approving the general programmes portion of the UNHCR budget when by far the greatest part of the budget was devoted to special programmes. Crises between sessions of the Executive Committee were today the rule rather than the exception. His delegation had raised the matter with the UNHCR management in the past and awaited suggestions to ensure that, in future, the Executive Committee played its proper role. It had been apparent in the Sub-Committee on Administrative and Financial Matters that other donors shared Canada's concerns in that area.

6. Turning to the overall strategy of "prevention, protection, solutions" put forward by the High Commissioner, he said that the first element, prevention, was clearly fundamental, but was also the most difficult. What happened when prevention failed was only too evident in Rwanda, but, where prevention failed, it was necessary to protect and, in that area at least, there had been some solid achievements. Serious problems persisted among the displaced and refugee populations of Rwanda, but great progress had also been made. In former Yugoslavia, UNHCR and the United Nations system had successfully protected hundreds of thousands of people within the territory of the former Yugoslav Republics and temporary protection schemes in Europe and elsewhere had protected thousands more, while yet others had been granted refugee status.

7. The Note on International Protection (A/AC.96/830) presented an exhaustive analysis of the daunting problems facing the international community. While recognizing the limitations of existing instruments, as well as the fact that their effectiveness ultimately depended on their signatories' political will to put them into effect, Canada believed that the 1951 Convention still remained the best tool for the protection of the most vulnerable and most threatened. That did not mean that it was not concerned about the plight of persons displaced en masse within their own country as a result of war or some other catastrophe. It continued to believe, however, that UNHCR involvement in such situations should be on a case-by-case basis under the authority of the Secretary-General.

8. Referring specifically to the Note's suggestion for an international declaration of guiding principles of international protection, including temporary protection (A/AC.96/830, para. 54), he said that Canada welcomed the analysis of the problems facing the international community, appreciated the contribution made by States which offered temporary protection and looked forward to further discussion of solutions of that type at the international level. It noted, however, that temporary protection was particularly appropriate where refugees or asylum-seekers had travelled only a relatively short distance - perhaps only into a neighbouring State - and where there was hope that they could soon return home.

9. For its part, Canada had traditionally been a country of permanent resettlement for refugees without other options, including women at risk and other especially vulnerable persons, whether selected abroad under Canada's annual refugee plan or granted refugee status in Canada by the Immigration and Refugee Board. In the current year, his country expected to receive more than 7,300 Government-sponsored refugees from abroad. As a country of

resettlement, Canada was pleased to collaborate with UNHCR in a review of the role of third-country resettlement begun during the past summer and hoped that the review would lead to improved procedures on the part of both UNHCR and receiving States to facilitate more accurate selection of the most vulnerable individuals, as well as more rapid responses.

10. Canada was currently conducting a review of its own resettlement programmes in the framework of national consultations on the Canadian immigration programme. His delegation would be happy to discuss the resettlement issue with other major countries of asylum.

11. His country had consistently called for improved recognition of the special dangers refugee women faced in their countries of origin, on the move and in refugee camps or elsewhere in countries of asylum. The Executive Committee should be pivotal in ensuring that refugee women received the full attention they deserved. It should also play a key role in promoting the development of national, international and UNHCR standards for explicit recognition of the fact that refugee women were often exposed to other forms of "persecution" than men. Canada intended to promote that issue during the coming year.

12. Mr. ENDO (Japan), expressing his Government's gratitude and appreciation for the tremendous efforts made by the High Commissioner and her staff in Rwanda and the neighbouring countries, said that, in response to a request from UNHCR, Japan had decided not only to make contributions in cash and in kind, but also, for the first time, to dispatch troops from the Self-Defence Forces to the field to participate in humanitarian operations. His delegation welcomed UNHCR's efforts to improve its emergency response capacity and hoped that the capacities of other humanitarian agencies would likewise be upgraded. Japan would be willing to take part in an exhaustive study of the lessons learned from the Rwandese operations.

13. Large-scale voluntary repatriation in safety and dignity was the most desirable solution to refugee problems. The Mozambican refugee repatriation programme presented some of the most complex problems in terms of the number of refugees and countries involved and his delegation greatly appreciated UNHCR's efforts in that connection. It also welcomed the repatriation programmes now well under way in Myanmar and hoped for the continuing full cooperation of the Government of Myanmar in those programmes. In other areas, such as Rwanda, it was to be hoped the conditions for voluntary repatriation would be realized as soon as possible. The Comprehensive Plan of Action for Indo-Chinese Refugees (CPA) provided an example of a durable solution and his Government was glad to see that a problem of almost 20 years' standing was due to disappear very shortly.

14. Noting that UNHCR was becoming increasingly involved in preventive activities in countries of origin, he said that, in his delegation's view, the role of UNHCR should be that of a catalyst among organizations with specific mandates and responsibilities in that sphere.

15. In connection with internally displaced persons, Japan supported the existing criteria and guidelines for UNHCR involvement, emphasizing, however, that assistance for and protection of internally displaced persons should be

secured through the cooperation of the relevant humanitarian agencies. A United Nations system-wide solution should be sought from the outset or at an early stage in each particular case. As the High Commissioner had often pointed out, humanitarian assistance could not be a substitute for a political solution as far as assistance for and the protection of populations affected by armed conflict were concerned.

16. As to the question of partnership with other institutions, he said that his delegation welcomed the increase in operations since January 1992 resulting from the revised working arrangements between UNHCR and WFP and hoped that similar arrangements would be developed with other agencies. Japan, as the largest donor of official development assistance, was also interested in seeing the gap between relief and development bridged in some way; it appreciated UNHCR's contacts with the Bretton Woods institutions and other potential donors, as well as its regular contacts with UNDP, and hoped that some mechanism would be worked out as a result of those contacts. His delegation welcomed the Oslo Declaration and Plan of Action adopted in June 1994 and would give every support to non-governmental organizations in Japan and other countries so as to enable them to work with their European and American counterparts.

17. The fact that the UNHCR budget had exceeded US$ 1 billion for three consecutive years reflected the extent of the international community's support for UNHCR activities, as well as the level of its expectations. The donors, constrained as they all were by financial difficulties, were nevertheless keeping a watchful eye on the UNHCR budget. His delegation attached great importance to the efficiency, transparency and accountability of UNHCR and therefore supported the High Commissioner's proposal for the establishment of an inspection and evaluation service on the understanding that the Inspector would work as a complement to the Board of Auditors, the Management Control Division and the newly established Office of Internal Oversight Services in New York.

18. Endorsing the High Commissioner's view that in performing its functions, UNHCR should also take account of the aspect of environmental preservation, his Government had seconded an environmental coordinator to UNHCR early in 1993. His delegation welcomed the development of "interim guidelines for environment-sensitive management of refugee programmes" and hoped that those guidelines would be reflected in actual operations.

19. In conclusion, after expressing the hope that the new UNHCR building would provide an efficient and comfortable workplace for all the staff, he announced his Government's pledge of approximately US$ 62 million, including $20 million for CPA, $20 million for the former Yugoslavia and the remainder for Mozambique, the Horn of Africa, Sri Lanka and other areas.

20. Mr. KULLAVANIJAYA (Thailand) said that, in a spirit of sympathy with the suffering of the affected population of Rwanda and solidarity with the humanitarian agencies, especially UNHCR, his Government had contributed a substantial amount to inter-agency appeal for assistance to the affected population of Rwanda. The same rationale applied to his Government's recent decision to contribute to the UNHCR/WFP joint appeal for voluntary repatriation of Myanmar refugees from Bangladesh to Myanmar.

21. For the past two decades, Thailand had shouldered the burden of assisting hundreds of thousands of refugees and asylum-seekers from neighbouring countries. While a number of those people had already returned home safely or had been resettled in third countries, more than 30,000 - the majority of whom were not eligible for resettlement - still remained in Thailand. Rather than focusing, as in the past, on the resettlement of those refugees to Third countries, international efforts should now be directed at their speedy repatriation. His Government therefore welcomed the outcome of the Fifth Meeting of the Steering Committee of the International Conference on Indo-Chinese refugees held at Geneva on 14 February 1994, at which it had been unanimously agreed that Vietnamese arriving in countries of first asylum should henceforth not be entitled to benefit from screening procedures under the Comprehensive Plan of Action (CPA), but should be treated in accordance with national legislation and internationally accepted practices. The Meeting had decided that all activities under CPA should be brought to an early conclusion before the target date of the end of 1995 or earlier, where possible, and that the return of all non-refugees from first-asylum countries should be accelerated to meet that target date.

22. For its part, his Government had made every effort to speed up the voluntary repatriation of Vietnamese non-refugees. Promotional activities and other measures were being implemented extensively to encourage more people to return to Viet Nam and plans were also under way to close the Panat Nikom resettlement processing centre by the end of 1994. Despite those efforts, his Government was still not satisfied with the current pace of repatriation. Region-wide monthly return movements under CPA in its present form were not at the level necessary to meet the target date of the end of 1995; complementary mechanisms had to be established to increase the momentum of return movements. His delegation took the view that the Steering Committee should meet well in advance of the target date with a view to considering any proposals that might be made for such mechanisms.

23. Another aspect of CPA that was of serious concern to his Government was the problem of 18,000 Laotian asylum seekers living in camps in Thailand, a problem regularly discussed within the framework of the Thai-Lao-UNHCR tripartite meetings. The seventh tripartite meeting, which had taken place in Thailand in July 1994, had firmly reiterated that the repatriation programme for Laotian asylum seekers should also be completed by the target date of the end of 1995 set by the Fifth Steering Committee and had drawn up an action plan to mobilize the necessary resources from the international community. A tripartite working group had been set up to monitor the implementation of the action plan. He appealed to the international community, donor countries and international and non-governmental organizations to give the repatriation programme their cooperation and financial support.

24. As to what was likely to happen after the conclusion of CPA in 1995, he noted that, in view of the present situation in the region, there was reason to expect that a large number of people would seek to enter Thailand illegally. Some of them might leave their countries as a result of situations of internal armed conflict, while others would leave simply to seek better job opportunities. His Government was exploring methods of determining the status of each group of people entering Thailand illegally so that those truly in need of protection and assistance might receive appropriate treatment.

Reaffirming his country's humanitarian policy towards people displaced into Thailand as a result of situations of conflict in their own countries, he said that his Government was prepared to provide temporary shelter to such people and to facilitate their safe return to their countries of origin when the situation returned to normal. It was also prepared to consider granting relief agencies access to returnees from Thai territory so that the necessary assistance might be provided to those people inside their countries of origin. His delegation maintained the view that people affected by armed conflict who were in need of international assistance should be able to receive such assistance in their own countries without having to cross the border.

25. In view of the prevailing instability in Cambodia, his Government once again urged UNHCR, in collaboration with other humanitarian organizations, seriously to consider the possibility of establishing appropriate facilities inside Cambodia to provide protection and assistance to Cambodians affected or displaced by situations of armed conflict.

26. His Government had also extended temporary assistance to students from Myanmar who had left their country and come to Thailand. A safe area had been established at a cost of US$ 1 million, borne by the Thai Government, to provide temporary shelter for the students and a budget of US$ 200,000 had been allocated for the current year to provide them with care and maintenance.

27. In coping with the situation of refugees and displaced persons in Thailand over the years, his Government had always enjoyed the close cooperation and support of non-governmental organizations. In recognition of the role played by those organizations, the Thai authorities had been holding regular meetings with the NGO community and had found such meetings useful in dealing with practical issues relating to the provision of care and maintenance to refugees and displaced persons. His Government therefore welcomed the launching of worldwide consultations between UNHCR and non-governmental organizations under the PARinAC process and was pleased to have hosted one of the regional conferences in Bangkok in February 1994. The successful conclusion of the PARinAC process at the Global Conference in Oslo in June 1994 was to be welcomed. In conclusion, he assured the High Commissioner of his Government's continuing full support for the work of her Office, in connection not in connection only with the refugee problem in Thailand, but also in other parts of the world.

28. Mr. WILLIAMS (United Kingdom), associating his delegation with the statement made earlier by the representative of Germany on behalf of the European Union and the acceding States, said that the United Kingdom recognized the growing burden on UNHCR and wished to pay tribute, in particular, to the UNHCR staff who had continued to provide protection and assistance to refugees even at considerable personal risk.

29. His Government had particular reasons of its own to thank UNHCR for the support it so ably provided in emergencies. Large-scale migration from Haiti and Cuba had posed special problems for the British Dependent Territories in the Caribbean, whose slender resources were unable to cope with the strain. The numbers of Haitian migrants reaching the Turks and Caicos Islands and Cuban migrants reaching the Cayman Islands during the present year had led his

Government to request UNHCR advice and technical assistance in dealing with the problem. In both cases, UNHCR had responded promptly and positively and had shown a practical understanding of the problems involved.

31. The important contribution made by UNHCR in the case of Vietnamese migrants in Hong Kong was also appreciated. His Government welcomed the intention expressed at the fifth CPA Steering Committee Meeting in February 1994 to bring the Comprehensive Plan of Action to a successful conclusion by the end of 1995, inter alia by clearing the camps in Hong Kong.

32. With regard to international protection issues, his Government's views were well known and had been well reflected in the statement made by the representative of Germany on behalf of the European Union at the preceding meeting.

33. Many of his delegation's concerns regarding UNHCR's administration and financing had arisen as a consequence of UNHCR's need to adapt in recent years in order to respond to emergencies. As a result of UNHCR's growing experience and capacity in emergency work and the fact that many of the current crises involved refugees, there was a growing tendency to turn automatically to UNHCR for assistance in the first instance. However, the members of the Executive Committee should not overlook the impact which that could have on UNHCR's other areas of work. There was a danger that UNHCR was being overstretched and that, in the effort to meet the new needs, traditional programmes would suffer.

34. At the recent meeting of the Sub-Committee on Administrative and Financial Matters (SCAF), his delegation and many others had drawn attention to the increasing difficulty encountered in drawing a distinction between UNHCR's general and special programmes activities. His delegation had suggested that a possible solution might be the creation of a single budget for UNHCR operations whereby all refugee needs could be met from the same source of funds, from the refugees' point of arrival in their country of refuge through to repatriation and resettlement. His delegation looked forward to UNHCR's own proposals on the issue and to a productive dialogue on the way forward.

35. It was also essential, in a climate of finite resources, for UNHCR to deploy its staff to where they were most needed. UNHCR must remain flexible and be able to adapt to changing circumstances. His Government therefore welcomed the current discussion within UNHCR on its strategy and priorities for Europe and looked forward to a continuing dialogue on the question.

36. More work needed to be done on developing the system of coordination under the auspices of the Department of Humanitarian Affairs (DHA). It was essential that all the organizations concerned should work together and that each should have a clear idea of what the others were doing in order to ensure that their programmes complemented each other. In that regard, the United Kingdom considered that the humanitarian programme in Angola, which was coordinated by a DHA office in the field, was a model worth following in other complex emergencies. It looked to UNHCR to support DHA in other ventures of that kind.

36. In his Government's view, UNHCR's own evaluation of its current relations with various United Nations and other agencies was a most useful and illuminating document. He congratulated UNHCR for trying to identify problems and for its efforts to date to enhance cooperation with other agencies. Much remained to be done and it was hoped that UNHCR would be able to make further progress during the year.

37. With regard to the Swedish delegation's suggestion at the recent SCAF meeting that an informal meeting should be held in conjunction with the 1995 session of the Economic and Social Council to review the imbalances in the capacity of various agencies to respond and to consider methods of improving humanitarian responses, his Government thought that the matter needed to be discussed first in the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) under the chairmanship of the Emergency Relief Coordinator. Delegations might therefore wish to consider including a provision in the current year's General Assembly resolution on the coordination of humanitarian assistance tasking IASC to look into the matter and report to the members of the Economic and Social Council within a specific time-frame.

38. In conclusion, he stressed that his comments had been made in a spirit of constructive partnership and reiterated his delegation's admiration for the great service to humanity which UNHCR performed in its contribution to the international community's response to emergencies across the world.

39. Mr. NORBERG (Sweden) said that the statement made by the representative of Germany at the preceding meeting on behalf of the European Union fully reflected the views of the Swedish delegation.

40. The large-scale enforced displacement of people, whether inside or outside national borders, was one of the most immediate consequences of war and political instability. In view of the overall desire of the United Nations and its Members to prevent and resolve any conflict that might endanger international peace and security, the Executive Committee and the High Commissioner had a responsibility and legitimate interest in accepting their share of the broader challenge of conflict prevention, conflict resolution and peace-building.

41. Preventing and resolving conflicts and building sustainable peace required a comprehensive approach. Political and diplomatic initiatives must go hand in hand with peace-keeping operations, human rights initiatives and humanitarian relief activities. Humanitarian assistance had saved many lives and proved to be an important tool in conflict prevention and conflict resolution. However, the situation in the former Yugoslavia, for example, had been a reminder that humanitarian assistance could easily become an excuse for lack of ability or will by the affected countries and the international community to deal with the underlying causes of the conflict. The need to strengthen the international community's ability to respond to those challenges had never been so obvious. That had to be done through a wide range of activities, most of which were outside the mandate of UNHCR and the Executive Committee. However, the present phase was only the first in a comprehensive, integrated and coordinated United Nations approach to conflict management.

42. With regard to matters that required attention, his Government stressed, first of all, that the institutional set up of the international community in the area of conflict emergencies, conflict prevention and conflict resolution must be gradually adapted to the new circumstances. Secondly, sustainable conflict resolution and peace-building required a close relationship between humanitarian emergency assistance, rehabilitation and long-term development activities. A new concept of integrated programming must be developed starting with the prevention and emergency phase. The relevant United Nations agencies must adapt their programming modalities to each other. Linkages had to be established that mutually reinforced and strengthened the activities carried out, by the United Nations, on the one hand, and the Bretton Woods institutions, on the other. Thirdly, the challenge of the United Nations humanitarian response in major complex emergencies was how to deal with gaps and imbalances in the capacity of the main humanitarian actors. Clear coordination between their different mandates, including responsibility for issues such as the internally displaced, demining and the demobilization of soldiers, must be established within the United Nations system. Fourthly, at the present time, internally displaced persons and others in need of protection far outnumbered those regarded as refugees under the 1951 Convention. Important differences still existed between the two groups in the areas of protection and assistance and equal treatment of all persons in need of protection had to be ensured. Fifthly, a comprehensive United Nations approach required further harmonization in the interpretation of legal instruments, as well as the development of new instruments and guiding principles to deal more effectively with new and rapidly changing situations.

43. With regard to the third point, General Assembly resolution 46/182 had provided the United Nations with the necessary tools to enable the system to cope more effectively with emergency matters. However, a consolidated United Nations response to emergency management was still not a reality. Responsibility still lay with the relevant United Nations agencies, in particular UNICEF, UNHCR and the World Food Programme (WFP). The members of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee must assume responsibility for operational coordination and the Emergency Relief Coordinator and the Department of Humanitarian Affairs were regarded as facilitators in that respect.

44. The role of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee and its Working Group must be reviewed by the agencies. The Working Group should be entrusted with a general mandate for the operational aspects of complex emergencies. One way to make progress with regard to that and other issues concerning gaps and imbalances in the system could be a joint informal meeting of the boards of WFP, UNICEF, UNDP and UNHCR in conjunction with the session of the Economic and Social Council in July 1995.

45. Refugees, the internally displaced and other persons in need of protection should all have access to international protection and assistance. To make progress in that area, there was a need for a variety of approaches and instruments. His delegation shared the view of the High Commissioner that the time might not yet be ripe for a legally binding instrument to fill the gap in the international protection regime, for instance in Europe, and he therefore strongly endorsed the proposal that progress in that regard could be made through the development of guiding principles.

46. The provision of protection for wholly uprooted societies must have a clear return focus. His Government believed in the concept developed under the term "temporary protection" and would appreciate continued work on the approaches involved in what it preferred to call "return-focused protection". His delegation stressed the need for the provision of assistance which facilitated the voluntary return in safety and dignity of wholly uprooted societies and their re-establishment in peace and security.

47. It believed, however, that UNHCR should be involved in all phases of the repatriation process by promoting concerted arrangements for specific situations, developing guidelines and seeking to encompass a broader view of international protection so that all the actors involved were aware of and abided by the fundamental principles of return. The close relationship between humanitarian assistance and international protection must be fully recognized and supported by the many United Nations agencies and non-governmental organizations involved in both countries of origin and countries of asylum. The need for that approach had been recently highlighted in the Rwandese refugee situation and successfully pursued in Mozambique and Guatemala. The Working Group on Humanitarian Issues of the International Conference on the Former Yugoslavia was another valuable approach.

48. His Government was concerned at the fact that, while resettlement needs remained high, the number of places available for resettlement seemed to be on the decline. The Swedish Parliament had established an annual quota of 1,800 refugees. Sweden had given UNHCR the option to exchange quota offers for financial contributions for refugee programmes; that meant that the equivalent of the cost of receiving a new refugee in Sweden, estimated at approximately US$ 16,000, could be transferred to UNHCR for use, for instance, in the region of the former Yugoslavia, thereby benefiting many more refugees. His Government hoped that such an approach could be useful in view of the High Commissioner's need for the flexible allocation of resources in financing programmes.

49. In conclusion, he said that his Government endorsed the proposals made by the United Kingdom and Canada in SCAF the previous week on the need to undertake proper financial planning together with UNHCR in the coming months. There was also a need to review ways to ensure that all UNHCR programmes were placed on a better and more secure financial basis.

50. Mr. WILLIS (Australia) said that the events which forced so many people to leave their homes and become refugees continued to call forth a worthy response in the work of UNHCR. To the great credit of the organization and its High Commissioner, that response was characterized by thoughtful and innovative policies and courageous and imaginative actions by UNHCR and its staff, particularly in the field.

51. Over the past year, that response had been demonstrated in the Rwanda crisis, involving over 2 million displaced persons outside the country, in addition to those internally displaced; in the former Yugoslavia, where the search continued for a durable solution; in Mozambique, where UNHCR, in close cooperation with other United Nations agencies, continued to demonstrate the utility of comprehensive approaches in any refugee return situation; and, in

Myanmar, where UNHCR had reached agreements with the Governments of Myanmar and Bangladesh to allow refugees to return to Myanmar from Bangladesh in conditions of safety and dignity.

52. Impressive as those achievements might be, there was unfortunately no indication that UNHCR would be under less pressure in the year ahead. Throughout the world, there were ever larger and more complex movements of people and ever-increasing needs for international protection. His delegation fully endorsed the agenda for action which the High Commissioner had set out in her statement and reaffirmed the importance of carefully formulated comprehensive approaches.

53. His Government agreed that there was a need for the international community to explore ways in which guidance could be developed for the protection of persons who were not refugees, as defined in the 1951 Convention, but were in vulnerable situations as a result of being displaced by war, generalized violence or internal conflict, while maintaining the integrity of traditional systems of asylum based on the Convention.

54. Many elements of the response required were already being implemented, including preventive action wherever possible, guarantees of personal security, provision of humanitarian relief, temporary protection and return to the country of origin as soon as possible.

55. The past year had highlighted the priority to be given to key operational issues such as the need for inter-agency coordination and the clear allocation of responsibilities at the field level. Tangible benefits continued to flow out of UNHCR's partnership arrangement with WFP.

56. There was a need to solve the problem of the allocation of responsibility between the operational agencies on issues such as demining and the internally displaced. His delegation welcomed the Swedish proposal to hold a pre-Economic and Social Council consultation in July 1995 in an effort to reach a decision on the issue.

57. Another key issue was UNHCR's developing role as a lead agency in humanitarian crises which did not inevitably or exclusively involve Convention refugees. While it was most practical and appropriate in certain situations for UNHCR to assume that role, action in the field should be governed by resources and operational capacity and not undertaken at the expense of UNHCR's core protection role.

58. Australia stood ready to assist in the development of more effective responses to international humanitarian need. Its commitment to sharing the international humanitarian burden was evident in its resettlement and aid programmes and diplomatic efforts aimed at addressing problems that gave rise to the outflow of people at their source, including the encouragement of closer observance of human rights.

59. His Government had also participated in multilateral peace-keeping initiatives, most recently through the deployment of Australian armed forces in Cambodia and Somalia and medical support to Rwanda.

60. For the vast majority of refugees and displaced persons, voluntary and orderly repatriation to their homeland in conditions of safety and dignity was the most appropriate long-term solution. But the need for resettlement would remain. His Government operated one of the world's largest humanitarian resettlement programmes and continued to be prepared to assist in that area.

61. His Government hoped that UNHCR's current review of resettlement would result in a well-considered appraisal of the role of resettlement and offer valuable suggestions on how to improve that important solution.

62. His Government had also emphasized close cooperation with Australian NGOs, in terms of funding, cooperation in field operations and assistance with the resettlement of refugees in Australia and in consultations on the Australian humanitarian programme. It had also found it helpful to include NGO representatives in its delegations to the Executive Committee's sessions and other international meetings. It called on UNHCR to continue its efforts to build more effective relations with its NGO partners and to continue to give priority to implementing key components of the Oslo Declaration and Plan of Action.

63. On the issue of an international or world refugee day, Australia considered it important to discuss the possible designation by the United Nations General Assembly of such an event, which would draw attention to the global refugee problem and the need for public awareness and information campaigns.

64. With regard to improvements in UNHCR's programme delivery and administrative accountability, as demand continued to grow exponentially, so would the need for UNHCR to give priority to building management and administrative capability. Key priorities in the coming year must include implementing new policies and guidelines for the protection of refugee women and children, implementing UNHCR's new guidelines to build more environmentally sustainable operations within the confines of its mandate; making the more systematic and effective evaluation of UNHCR's operations part of its ongoing work; improving staff capacity; and increasing UNHCR's accountability to the Executive Committee.

65. Referring to a regional issue of importance to his Government, he said that the Comprehensive Plan of Action for Indo-Chinese Refugees (CPA) was a successful example of how to tackle an outflow of people in a comprehensive regional manner. In that connection, Australia had resettled over 17,600 Indo-Chinese refugees since the commencement of the plan. However, CPA was entering its final and most challenging stage, which was to bring it to completion by the end of 1995. The challenge was to conclude CPA successfully in a peaceful and dignified manner, despite mounting pressure from those who falsely believed that to undermine CPA would lead to the resettlement of those in the camps.

66. Like many other countries of asylum, Australia was affected by problems of disorderly or irregular migration, specifically problems of migrant trafficking and the abuse of asylum systems. That had been illustrated

recently by the arrival in Australia of boats carrying people who had been found not to be refugees at the CPA holding centre in Galang and who had sought to enter Australia through the domestic asylum process.

67. While UNHCR accepted that they were not in need of protection and should have been returned to Galang, under Australian law, his Government had been obliged to allow them access to Australia's refugee determination process. Following consultations with UNHCR and others, Australia was in the process of enacting legislation in relation to safe third countries that, had it existed when the boats had landed, would have enabled the immediate return of their passengers to Galang. The legislation had safeguards to ensure that Australia's obligations under the 1951 Convention continued to be met.

68. As part of a regional focus on irregular movements, Australia had hosted regional consultations on illegal migration in April 1994. Those consultations, in which UNHCR and IOM had participated, were a forum to enable countries of the Asia-Pacific region to meet and establish a dialogue that addressed regional issues. Without a regional approach and understanding, the problem of irregular population movements in the region could not be solved.

69. It would be vitally important in the years to come for UNHCR and its partners in the multilateral system to pay close attention to the work being done in related areas of concern. Some areas which should be noted as having special relevance were the Review Conference on the 1980 Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons which May Be Deemed to be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects, which would, he hoped, place new restrictions on the deployment of landmines in situations threatening civilians; the Inter-Governmental Group of Experts on the Protection of War Victims, which would make proposals to alleviate the plight of millions of persons who are victims of both international and non-international armed conflicts; the International Conference of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, which was to be held in December 1995 and which would provide a special opportunity to build a new commitment to principles and rules designed to reduce pressure on UNHCR; and the Regional Conference on Humanitarian Law which would bring together Government officials, armed forces personnel, academics and NGOs from the Asia-Pacific region and was to be held in Canberra in December 1994 under the sponsorship of the Australian Red Cross. It would make a specific regional contribution to the search for solutions to problems central to the concerns of the High Commissioner. In addition, his delegation recommended that the High Commissioner should sponsor a fresh regional consultation on the legal issues related to refugee protection in the Asia-Pacific region.

70. Mr. JIN Yongjian (People's Republic of China) said that, despite significant achievements in addressing refugee problems in the past year, the overall situation was still a matter of serious concern, with 23 million people requiring UNHCR's assistance in 1994. Any efforts to solve refugee problems would inevitably involve humanitarian assistance and action to eradicate the root causes, which included foreign aggression, outside interference in the affairs of sovereign States, territorial disputes and internal conflicts resulting from ethnic or religious discord.

71. A more just and equitable new world political and economic order based on the five principles of peaceful coexistence was an essential element in narrowing the gap between North and South. That was all the more necessary because developing countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America continued to host the majority of refugees. Developed countries should share the burden of the solution to the refugee problem and encourage close cooperation between countries of origin, countries of asylum and donor countries. An urgent response to refugee flows was also necessary and could be effective, as had been seen in the case of Rwanda. However, long-standing refugee problems should not be forgotten.

72. His Government attached great importance to the 1969 OAU Convention governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa, which had contributed greatly to the protection of refugees by expanding the definition of refugees embodied in the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees.

73. UNHCR commanded universal respect and enjoyed particular success in its field because of its adherence to humanitarian principles and its non-political nature. Its future success depended on continued respect for its mandate, for State sovereignty and for the wishes of the peoples of the countries concerned.

74. As a party to the 1951 Convention and 1967 Protocol since 1978, China had provided effective protection to more than 280,000 Indo-Chinese refugees. In general, those refugees were satisfied with their treatment by the Government of China. However, some of them were considering returning home, as the situation in their countries of origin had improved.

75. Voluntary repatriation was the best solution to the refugee problem. In that connection, a typical example was the friendly and successful cooperation between the Governments of China and Laos. Conditions were ripe for the voluntary repatriation of other Indo-Chinese refugees and his Government hoped that the countries concerned would respond swiftly and positively. China was ready to engage in negotiations with those countries, but also needed the support and assistance of the international community and of UNHCR, in particular.

76. China had traditionally supported UNHCR's refugee protection efforts and had maintained good relations with it. The Government of China had in principle agreed to regularize UNHCR's representation in China and upgrade the chargé de mission to a Branch Office.

77. Mgr. TABET (Holy See) said that, despite the lack of resources, the work of the High Commissioner for Refugees and her staff was exemplary and worthy of the deepest respect.

78. The situations with which UNHCR had to deal were complicated by armed conflict, human rights violations and even crimes against humanity and genocide, which had all helped to undermine the Government structures of countries and regions and led to the displacement of millions of people, not least in the former Yugoslavia, including Bosnia and Herzegovina, where UNHCR

had to continue to provide assistance and protection despite the problems involved in gaining access to the population and the manipulation of humanitarian intervention by the parties to the conflict.

79. The crisis in Rwanda had clearly highlighted the shortcomings of the response of the international community and the United Nations system and, i particular, the lack of early-warning machinery and measures to prevent massacres and mass outflows. Improved coordination was essential if the refugees were to be able to return to their country of origin.

80. UNHCR had, however, been successful in other areas, especially in helpi refugees to return to Mozambique and Myanmar. The Note on International Protection (A/AC.96/830) showed that the scope of UNHCR's activity was now much broader than that provided for in the 1951 Convention and 1967 Protocol The international community therefore had to give UNHCR a broader mandate an the legal and material resources it needed so that it could provide protecti for refugees and help to solve their problems, particularly against a background of armed conflict and large-scale displacements of persons. Such expanded objectives meant that international refugee law and regional refugee instruments had to be adapted to take account of new and more complex refugee problems and might lead to the adoption of a universal or regional declaratio of guiding principles, as suggested in the Note on International Protection (A/AC.96/830).

81. The crises in the former Yugoslavia and Rwanda had shown that UNHCR urgently needed to expand its network of humanitarian assistance with the support of Governments and intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations, as recommended in the Oslo Declaration and Plan of Action on the Plight of Refugees, Returnees and Displaced Persons in Southern Africa.

82. Although the most effective solution to refugee problems was voluntary repatriation, those who had repatriated often faced threats of reprisals and lack of security. Machinery to monitor their safety and ensure respect for their human rights was therefore essential. The repatriation of refugees must, however, be voluntary in every respect and the principle of non-refoulement had to be observed. The international community had made remarkable progress with regard to the repatriation of refugees in South-East Asia and Central America, but it was time to find an appropriate solution to the desperate situation facing persons who were in camps or who did not wish to return to their countries of origin for fear of reprisals.

83. The Holy See supported the Executive Committee's general conclusions on internally displaced persons and measures to assist refugee women and children (A/AC.96/826). Conflicts which led to large-scale displacements of persons, especially the most vulnerable, caused unspeakable suffering and hardship. The international community therefore had to do more than simply provide material assistance. In cooperation with intergovernmental organizations and voluntary associations, ways had to be found to reunite families and communities and promote reconciliation. The Church was taking an active part in such efforts.

84. Mr. de BONNECORSE (France) said that, in accordance with a United Nations resolution, France had intervened in Rwanda with the assistance of the African

countries prepared to run the risks involved in such an operation. Thousands of lives had been saved and the way had been paved for humanitarian assistance in the period before the UNAMIR troops had been able to take over. France's efforts had met with a massive response from United Nations agencies, including UNHCR, which had been particularly effective in dealing with the situation in Goma.

85. Millions of Rwandese refugees and persons displaced inside Rwanda continued to rely on the international community. In accordance with its mandate, UNHCR was working to bring about their repatriation, which was the only solution for the future of Rwanda and the only way to ensure stability in the region. However, repatriation had to be carried out with the full consent of the refugees concerned.

86. The international community was continuing its unrelenting efforts to find a solution to the problem of Bosnia and Herzegovina. UNHCR was in the front line, faced with a rapidly deteriorating situation. Attacks in and around Sarajevo were of particular concern, particularly when vital supply lines to the city were in danger. UNHCR's work in its own area and as coordinator of United Nations humanitarian assistance was essential to the survival of thousands of persons for whom UNHCR was the only hope.

87. UNHCR was also working behind the scenes to help solve many refugee crises which did not make front-page news, including long-standing conflicts in which it was trying to rehabilitate reception areas and organize lengthy and difficult repatriation operations. France had played an active role in the Comprehensive Plan of Action (CPA) and was helping UNHCR repatriate Somali refugees, especially from Djibouti.

88. The situation of internally displaced persons was one of UNHCR's main concerns. To date, there had been over 20 million displaced persons needing assistance. UNHCR's efforts to find a solution to their problems had resulted in the adoption of clearly defined assistance procedures which respected State sovereignty and were flexible enough to be adapted to a wide range of situations.

89. In dealing with temporary asylum, UNHCR had alerted the international community to the situation of persons who were in need of assistance, but were not covered by any international protection instruments. The solution was, however, not to amend existing texts or draft new instruments, but to adopt a concerted approach to specific situations, as in the case of the situation in the former Yugoslavia. Under UNHCR's auspices, solutions to crises could be found in the best interest of the victims and people qualifying for temporary asylum could be identified. On several occasions, France had granted asylum to people who were outside internationally protected categories and thus complied fully with the basic elements of temporary protection recommended by UNHCR.

90. As far as asylum in Europe was concerned, France and its partners had to ensure that those who tried to misuse the asylum laws would not prevent legitimate and deserving cases from benefiting from them. When the Dublin Convention determining the State responsible for examining applications for

asylum lodged in one of the member States of the European Communities had entered into force, it would provide better protection for asylum-seekers and member States.

91. Prevention was another matter of concern. Although it went beyond UNHCR's mandate, the establishment of early-warning mechanisms and cooperation with other United Nations bodies should be developed. The effect of such mechanisms would be limited, but assistance could be organized more promptly and large-scale displacements of persons could be prevented if the international community was better able to predict crises.

92. Mr. HYNNINEN (Finland) said that the former Yugoslavia and Rwanda had been the main recipients of Finnish humanitarian contributions during the present budgetary period. However, other areas of unrest where the refugee situation was critical and the potential for new refugee flows existed were also of serious concern.

93. The situation in the territory of the former Soviet Union was a case in point, partly as a result of ethnic conflicts and abrupt political changes which had led to social tension. Emergency relief, early-warning mechanisms and other preventive measures were needed to ensure that the situation remained under control. Mass information campaigns and assistance in institution-building in the newly reorganized societies were of the utmost importance.

94. Regional approaches and strategies would help greatly to manage refugee problems throughout the world. They would enable the international community to take account of regional specificities and different situations when trying to eradicate the root causes of refugee and migration problems.

95. Finland welcomed UNHCR's initiative to develop a comprehensive approach to the refugee and migration problem in the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). It was also prepared actively to contribute to the multilateral process. To that end, it had continued to intensify cooperation with the Russian authorities at the federal and regional levels. Action was needed on two fronts: to deal with problems relating to internal migrants in the CIS; and to formulate policies targeting refugees from outside the region. It was particularly important that a status determination and reception system should be set up in Russia. Multilateral efforts to assist the Baltic countries were gaining momentum. A comprehensive programme prepared jointly by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and UNHCR had been adopted and would be implemented in the near future.

96. Non-governmental organizations had a valuable role to play in finding solutions to the problems of refugees and internally displaced persons. The Partnership in Action (PARinAC) process provided an important forum for consultation between NGOs and UNHCR at the regional and global levels. The Oslo Declaration and Plan of Action were also important steps towards increased cooperation.

97. UNHCR continued to be the main channel of Finland's multilateral assistance to refugees. Efforts had been made to increase support. Finnish contributions to UNHCR thus stood at approximately Fmk 50 million for 1994, a 20 per cent increase over the total contribution for 1993.

98. Mr. TABESH (Islamic Republic of Iran) said the fact that the number of refugees in the world had now reached a level described by UNHCR as "unprecedented" was a clear indication that the international approach to the problem had not been a successful one. Its root cause should be sought in policies of aggression, war, underdevelopment and inequalities in the international system, including the lack of access by almost 1 billion human beings to satisfaction of their basic needs and their right to development. That should become the focus of all preventive strategies and care and maintenance policies.

99. Given that the refugee question was a matter of international responsibility, he wondered why refugee host countries, especially in the developing world, were still shouldering the burden and why the basic principles laid down in the 1951 Convention and 1967 Protocol, such as the principle of burden-sharing, were not being adequately observed. There should be a new approach to the refugee problem in the light of new international economic realities, but using existing international instruments. In every circumstance, UNHCR should facilitate the opening of a frank and constructive dialogue between refugee-sending and refugee-receiving countries which would encompass, in particular, the economic and developmental problems that forced people to leave their countries.

100. The Islamic Republic of Iran still suffered from the gap between increasing "refugee needs" and the "international assistance" currently being given. For the past 15 years, it had been bridging that widening gap by using its own national resources. However, the continuation of those services to refugees would not be possible because of the economic adjustments under way in his country and it was his hope and expectation that UNHCR would revise and increase the budget allocation to the Islamic Republic of Iran as promised, despite the fact that the proposed programme and budget for 1995 showed a sharp decrease.

101. Voluntary, dignified and safe repatriation had been encouraged in recent years as the most appropriate durable solution for the Afghan and Iraqi refugee populations in his country. In the case of the Afghan refugees, an increase in the assistance package could be of vital importance in encouraging repatriation in the short term, but experience showed that the major obstacle was the underdeveloped social and economic infrastructure in Afghanistan and repatriation had to be planned in both countries comprehensively and in a coordinated manner. The efforts of the United Nations system and of non-governmental organizations for the reconstruction of Afghanistan should be repatriation-oriented and the repatriation operation should be development-oriented if the desired ends were to be achieved.

102. In the case of the Iraqi refugees in the Islamic Republic of Iran, he said his country had been assisting their voluntary repatriation during the year to the northern part of Iraq, but the situation in the southern part was a cause of grave concern. If effective and preventive policies were not

pursued, it could face a much larger refugee influx in the months to come from the southern area of Iraq. It had also received Iraqi refugees who had sought refuge in Saudi Arabia, but who had expressed their wish to be resettled in the Islamic Republic of Iran. Such resettlement operations were being carried out with the close cooperation of UNHCR.

103. He also drew attention to the humanitarian assistance sent by his country to Azeri displaced persons within their own territory.

104. His Government welcomed the positive partnership of non-governmental organizations in assisting refugees in the Islamic Republic of Iran; the most successful example was undoubtedly the work being done with the Swiss Academy for Development in the western and southern provinces. Because of the many and varied emergencies occurring in the south-west Asia region, it was both necessary and timely to organize regional meetings to serve as a framework for a dialogue between refugee-sending and refugee-receiving countries and for formulating a regional solution and capacity-building for an efficient and speedy response. His country was prepared to continue to take part in such an initiative.

105. Mr. VERGNE SABOIA (Brazil) said that refugee problems worldwide had not diminished since the forty-fourth session of the Executive Committee. Despite some encouraging developments, new conflicts had arisen and old ones had continued. There was the civil war in Rwanda and the humanitarian tragedy provoked by the sudden influx of hundreds of thousands of refugees into neighbouring countries, but there had been dramatic developments in other regions as well, notably the Horn of Africa, central Asia and the Caribbean.

106. Behind almost every refugee crisis there was widespread disrespect of human rights, compounded by extremely adverse economic and social conditions. People no longer felt that they were protected, as far as their basic rights were concerned, by the authorities of their places of origin or residence and consequently fled to other countries or regions in the hope of achieving security. In extreme cases, parties to conflicts actually forced massive flows of people as a means of achieving military or political goals.

107. The 1951 Convention and its 1967 Protocol, together with the Statute of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner, had achieved much in dealing with refugee matters, but no longer seemed capable of responding adequately to present challenges. Now, the overwhelming majority of people in need of protection did not, strictly speaking, fall under the provisions of the Convention and its Protocol. Such was the case of people trying to escape the indiscriminate devastation that accompanied international conflicts and civil war. In some recent conflicts, those people, together with others fleeing religious, ethnic or political persecution, had arrived at an unprecedented rate at places of refuge, especially where boundaries between countries were relatively permeable. In such circumstances, status determination procedures on an individual basis could be extremely difficult to implement. Group status determination and temporary protection were the remedies that had been applied, but, while often proving effective, they should not be regarded by the international community as a definitive solution.

108. Brazil was ready to contribute to the search for better clarification of a wide range of situations which were not satisfactorily covered by the international legal framework and viewed with interest the pragmatic approach to cases of mass influx, including consolidation of the concept of temporary protection. Meanwhile, the basic principles of international refugee law, especially those of non-refoulement, solidarity and burden-sharing, should be strictly adhered to by all States and applied to categories of people other than those covered by the Convention.

109. All Governments, particularly those of developed countries, should act in a spirit of generosity and not focus exclusively on their short-term needs. They should take into consideration the fact that many of the crises that caused refugee flows had erupted against a background of extreme poverty and economic, social and political imbalances for which the richer countries shared responsibility. They should draw inspiration from those African countries which, despite their own enormous problems, had opened their borders to millions of refugees in recent times.

110. The problems of protection were not limited to the question of the granting of asylum. The fundamental rights of refugees admitted under temporary protection must be guaranteed. His delegation was concerned about the fate of many refugees, especially women and children, who had been victims of violence in the camps, including sexual abuse. Brazil gave its full support to UNHCR's efforts to address that issue and welcomed the People-Oriented Planning approach developed by the High Commissioner, the progress report on the implementation of the guidelines on the protection of refugee women and the revised version of the guidelines on protection and care of refugee children. Another cause for concern was the increasing frequency of racist or xenophobic acts of violence against refugees.

111. Voluntary repatriation was the preferable solution, followed by local integration and resettlement, but, in all cases, conditions had to be created to prevent destabilization. The role of UNHCR was crucial in ensuring progress from relief to development, but its involvement should remain within the scope of its mandate and it should coordinate its efforts with other relevant agencies. Coordination, particularly in the field, was essential. However, the solution and prevention of refugee crises ultimately lay in the correction of the huge imbalances which persisted in the world and that in turn would demand from decision-makers everywhere, but especially in the affluent countries, both a broader and future-oriented view and a stronger political will. Without a stronger commitment to international cooperation to eliminate poverty and promote development, it would be more difficult for democracy and human rights in the developing world to take root, thereby nurturing new crises and new coercive displacements of people.

112. Mr. MARIKI (United Republic of Tanzania) said that the High Commissioner's recent visit to his country following the tragedy in Rwanda had been an inspiration and Tanzania looked forward to continued cooperation with her Office in addressing the immense problems it faced as a result of the massive influx of refugees from Rwanda and Burundi.

113. At the forty-fourth session of the Executive Committee, there had been general optimism about the repatriations taking place to Mozambique, Rwanda and Burundi following the peace agreement between the Government of Mozambique and the then RENAMO, the signing of the Arusha Peace Accord between the then Government of Rwanda and the Rwandese Patriotic Front and the democratic elections in Burundi, which had seen the emergence of the country's first democratically elected President. Unfortunately, optimism had been justified only in the case of Mozambique.

114. Following the attempted coup d'état in Burundi in October 1993 and the killing of its President, Tanzania had received over than 400,000 refugees in addition to the more than 300,000 already in the country. The remaining caseload of the October 1993 influx was about 40,000, with between 30 and 80 arriving every week. Following the plane crash in April 1994, which had killed both the Rwandese and Burundi Presidents, Tanzania had been giving sanctuary to over 510,000 refugees as of mid-September 1994. All of them were registered and 1,200 were still arriving every day. The influx of more than 250,000 refugees in the 24-hour period between 28 and 29 April 1994 had been described as the largest and most rapid influx UNHCR had ever seen. It had been a catastrophe for Tanzania, but he wished to take the opportunity to thank all those Governments, regional groupings and NGOs which had given assistance.

115. Tanzania's total refugee population by the end of the current session of the Executive Committee would be close to 1 million and the impact on local communities was extremely serious in terms of environmental hazards, food security, overstretched social amenities and wear and tear on infrastructure. His Government had set up a special task force to assess the impact of the influx and a report on its findings was available. A tentative budget had also been drawn up for actions to assist the local population to absorb the adverse effects of the refugee influx. A situation in which the host population was outnumbered between three and four times by refugees could not be sustained without adopting a completely new approach to emergency assistance, which included taking adequate care of the interests of local communities, and he called on the High Commissioner to assume a leading role in mobilizing international assistance based on his Government's refugee impact study.

116. The repatriation of Mozambican refugees was proceeding satisfactorily, but he requested that the handover of the project to his Government should be done after one year instead of six months. The remaining caseload would be slightly over 6,000. The Rwandese and Burundi repatriations should both be approached regionally and be regarded as one repatriation programme. The return of Rwandese refugees would be one of the most difficult to achieve because of the magnitude of the massacres and their repatriation should be carefully planned. There should be a general amnesty for those who had committed minor offences, in order to convince the refugees that they should return home. His Government had clearly stated that it fully supported the establishment of an international tribunal to try those responsible for the genocide in Rwanda and it was ready to cooperate in any procedures acceptable to the international community and conforming to international law. To facilitate the smooth repatriation of refugees, concerted efforts should be made to rehabilitate the damaged infrastructure of the country of origin,

especially hospital services, education and communications. Likewise, asylum countries should also be assisted in absorbing the impact on their social service networks.

117. With regard to the principles of international protection, any attempt by any country or group of countries to undermine the international system of refugee protection created a danger that other countries might emulate it, thereby undermining agreed conventions, standards and practices. His delegation proposed that a special budget should be set up for income-generating activities that would be intended for refugee women and children in order to take account of the reality of cultural values and habits which discriminated against women and children in such areas as inheritance, education and property ownership. Such budgets should be reflected in all refugee programmes implemented in all countries of asylum.

118. Lastly, his delegation urged UNHCR fully to implement the Rio Declaration in drawing up sound development and environmental conservation plans of action in countries of asylum that hosted large numbers of refugees. Issues such as combating desertification, managing fragile ecosystems, conserving biological diversity, protecting the quality and supply of fresh water resources and managing solid waste and sewage in an environmentally sound manner, as addressed by the Rio Declaration, should also be adequately addressed by the current session of the Executive Committee.

The meeting rose at 6.05 p.m.